

SEPARATE STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS

Re: In the Matter of Amendment of Part 1, Subpart N of the Commission's Rules Concerning Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Disability in the Commission's Programs and Activities

I am pleased to support the *Section 504 Order and Handbook*. This update is long overdue, but all the more welcome for that. I am encouraged that we are updating our regulations today and establishing a regular review of these rules to help keep them up-to-date in the future.

The Commission has made great strides over the past several years to improve accessibility. Among other things, the Commission wrote new rules to ensure that communications products and services are accessible to those with disabilities; overhauled and updated our Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) rules; established and implemented 711 as a nationwide relay number; took action on captioning to ensure that everyone has access to televised information, including most importantly warnings about emergency situations; and allocated spectrum for assistive listening devices.

But we must not rest on these accomplishments; we must build on them. The Commission needs now to look at the important issues of Internet relay, hearing aid compatibility for digital wireless phones, accessibility to digital and interactive television, and implementation of TTY access to E-911 and video description.

My office was fortunate to have an intern with a disability to work with us last summer. The Commission did an outstanding job of providing accommodations for us, but I wonder whether everyone at this agency is aware of the kinds of accommodations the Commission can – and indeed, is required to – provide for our employees with disabilities. This *Handbook* is a good step to help us understand, and to make us a model not only of compliance -- but of leadership. We can do more. I would like to see this *Handbook* be used as a model for the Commission to develop other handbooks to address related issues. The Commission has responsibilities under Sections 501 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act to provide accommodations to our employees with disabilities, and to ensure that the electronic and information technology that we use, build, buy, and/or lease is accessible to persons with disabilities. A Section 501 Handbook could be a valuable tool for FCC employees, co-workers, and supervisors of employees with disabilities. Likewise, a Section 508 Handbook would assist all of us at the Commission who work with electronic and information technology to learn how to make decisions when procuring technology. It is not only the right thing to do, it is the law.

I want to thank the Disability Rights Office for its leadership on this item, particularly those who spearheaded the *Handbook*. Thank you for your dedication to your jobs, and for helping the Commission to be accessible to members of the public with disabilities.